

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2446

As Amended by the Senate:

Title: An act relating to superior court judges.

Brief Description: Creating two additional superior court positions for Chelan and Douglas counties jointly.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representative Foreman; by request of Administrator for the Courts).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Law & Justice: 1/24/96, 1/30/96 [DP];
Appropriations: 2/3/96 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/8/96, 95-0.
Senate Amended.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 16 members: Representatives Sheahan, Chairman; Delvin, Vice Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Dellwo, Ranking Minority Member; Costa, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell; Carrell; Chappell; Cody; Lambert; McMahan; Morris; Murray; Robertson; Smith and Sterk.

Staff: Edie Adams (786-7180).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 28 members: Representatives Huff, Chairman; Clements, Vice Chairman; Pelesky, Vice Chairman; H. Sommers, Ranking Minority Member; Valle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Beeksma; Brumsickle; Carlson; Chappell; Cooke; Crouse; Dellwo; Dyer; Foreman; Grant; Hargrove; Hickel; Kessler; Lambert; Linville; McMorris; Poulsen; Reams; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Talcott and Wolfe.

Staff: Jim Lux (786-7152).

Background: The Legislature sets by statute the number of Superior Court judges in each county. Periodically, the Office of the Administrator for the Courts (OAC) conducts a weighted caseload study to determine the need for additional judges in the various counties. Currently, Chelan and Douglas counties jointly have three judges. The weighted caseload analysis by the OAC indicates a need, as of 1995, for 4.53 judges in the counties.

Retirement benefits and one-half of the salary of a Superior Court judge is paid by the state. The other half of the judge's salary and all other costs associated with a judicial position, such as capital and support staff costs, are borne by the county.

Summary of Bill: The number of judicial positions in Chelan and Douglas counties is increased from three to five. Both additional judicial positions will take effect February 1, 1997.

The new judicial positions become effective only if the legislative authorities of Chelan and Douglas counties jointly agree that the counties will pay their share of the cost of the positions without reimbursement from the state.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S): The number of superior court judicial positions in Spokane County is increased from 10 to 11, and the number of superior court judicial positions in Thurston County is increased from 6 to 8. One of the new Thurston County judicial positions is effective July 1, 1996, and the other Thurston County judicial position is effective July 1, 2000. The July 1, 1996 deadline for filling currently authorized King County Superior Court positions is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The judicial positions created in section 1 shall be effective February 1, 1997.

Testimony For: (Law & Justice) The workload of Superior Court judges in Chelan and Douglas counties has increased to an extent that two additional judicial positions are needed.

(Appropriations) None.

Testimony Against: (Law & Justice) None.

(Appropriations) None.

Testified: (Law & Justice) Representative Foreman, prime sponsor; and Judge "Chip" Small, Superior Court Judges Association (pro).

(Appropriations) None.